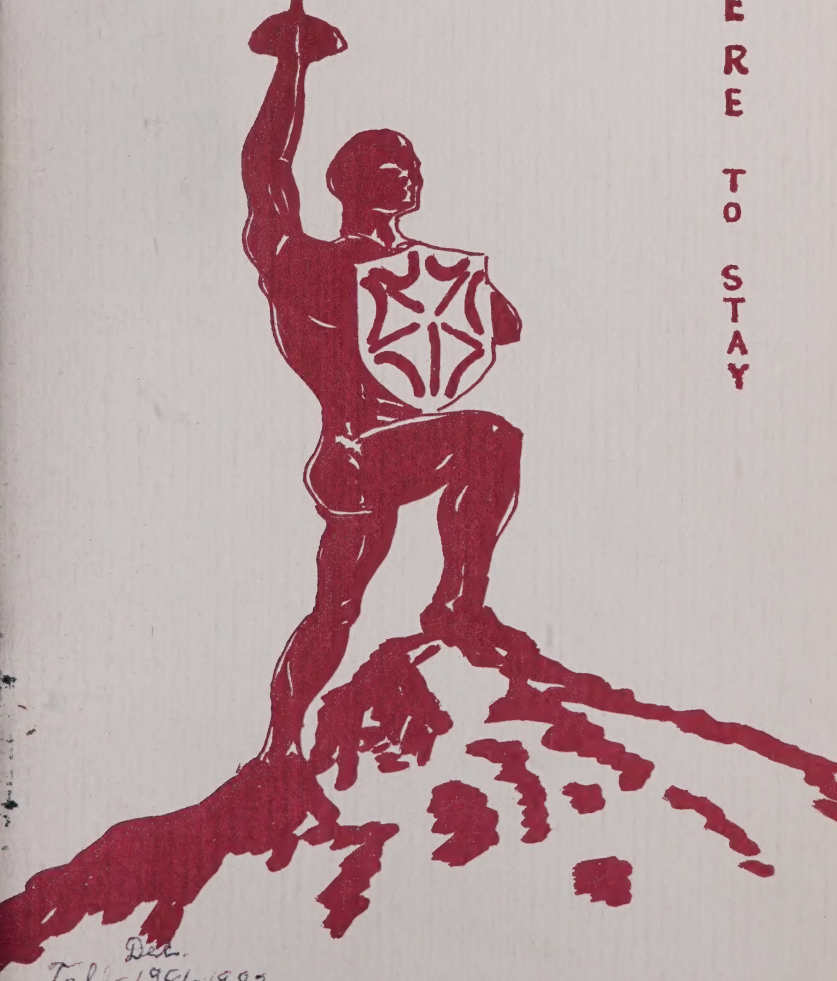
Dec
'81

Ex Umbra

HERE TO STAY



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EX UMBRA

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From The Editor:

My fellow Eagles,

I am proud to say that again, with your help, we have come out with the second edition of EX UMBRA.

As you know, all works submitted are carefully selected and edited by my staff and myself for printing in our magazine. For those works not chosen, please do not be discouraged. Just sit down, write, and resubmit your work for consideration in the next publication.

Remember, you are a "Mighty Eagle" who never lets anything get in your way. The Eagle stands tall, walks proud, and holds its head up high.

You're Wonderful—Truly Wonderful!!!

Darryl E. Hylton
Editor-in-Chief

Ex Umbra Literary Magazine
December 1981

This publication neither practices nor condones discrimation in any form, against students, employees, subscribers, advertisers, or applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or handicaps.

Indispensable Man

Teresa Click

Some time when you're feeling important,
Some time when your ego's in bloom;
Some time when you take it for granted,
You're the best qualified in the room.

Some time when you feel you're going,
Would leave an unfillable hole;
Just follow this simple instruction,
And see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to your wrist;
Pull it out. The hole that remains,
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You may splash all you please as you enter,
You may stir up the water galore;
But stop and you'll find in a minute,
That it looks quite the same as before.

The moral to this quaint example,
Is do just the best as you can;
Be proud of yourself but remember,
There's no indispensable man.

Editor's note: This poem is the winner of the Ex Umbra Poetry Contest. The editor and the staff extend their congratualtions to Ms. Click.

Looking Back

Bonita A. McZorn

I will never forget
My first impression of N.C.C.U.
the people, the food, kindness everywhere.

It was all so new
Yet I learned what it takes to become an Eagle.

Start with eagerness, spirit and a desire to learn.
Shortly after, various things—everything has a new meaning.
An appeal that all students yearn.

So we live, here we go.
How it turns out no one knows.
Not every person can change the world
but you can change yourself.

Finally, the individual character remains your
personal signature of having been a true Eagle.

From beginning to end, a real Eagle evolves in
''Truth and Service''.

GOD'S CREATIONS

Shiela Goins

First there was Adam
Then there was Eve
They covered their bodies
With Godly leaves.

Eve was created by Adam's rib
They had babies and placed
Them in a crib
Abe and Cane were their names.

God died to save our sins
For us to be loyal and to be friends
He didn't die for us to fight
He died to save our moral rights.

So when you're feeling lonely at night
Fall down on your knees and pray
Things may not seem to be going right
But God is on his way.

What Can A Black Man Do!

Alvis Tinnin

Down graded, debauched and debackled, spit on
and despised, hated by all, even those supposed
to be his own.
I roamed the country asking every black
scholar I met, ''What can a black man do?''
Quite a bit today was the usual pat reply or go
to school and get a good job. One day I asked a
black wino in the street and he gave me the key
to the light. He replied to my question as none
had before him. He said, ''Rise up and accept your
own and be yourself. Learn the history of the
black man not as 'they' teach you but the truth
for only the truth will set a black free.'' He
then said, ''Young man take it for what it's worth.
The black man is the father of civilization
and the cream of the planet earth.''

The Beauty Of It All

M. Bernardeane Horton

The rose so fresh and pure is a great symbol
of love.
The sky so blue and so peaceful makes you think
of life there.
The rain, it comes and goes when it pleases and
settles down anywhere it likes.
The grass springs up where it chooses and most of
the time where it is not wanted.
And who can possibly forget the mountains whose
beauty and magnificance outshines any other natural
creation to me.
The oceans, the rivers, the seas, they flow where
they desire keeping the fish and all the creatures of
the seas comfortable in their home enviroment.
Yet all these things seem so funny, but they are all so
passionate. And it just reminds me of the simple things
we take for granted, and of course of the beauty of it all!

LOVE

SherVonne Bell

Love is an abstract emotion
Which deals with care, understanding,
and devotion.
When trying to depict or characterize
the ingredients of this
mysterious potion,
One must approach this task
cautiously and proceed in
slow motion.

Since love is abstract, it holds
no true identity, although
within love one can
find true serenity

Love can be understood, this is
true for sure, but in this
obstacle of adventure only
two strong people
can endure.
In this game called love, the
purpose, one can't find.
But some create their game
cards solely for the purpose
of blowing another's mind.

Love can be beautiful, this
theory can't be denied
As long as the feelings or
emotions we find no reasons
to hide.

Love can't be touched or tasted.
Love is abstract.
Love exists and this is a
fact!
Love
and
Live!

SHOW ME THE WAY

Walter E. Hughey

Lord I am confused
In fact, I think I stay confused most of the time
One side of me seems to stay mad
Wants to take over your job and run the world
To feed all the hungry people
Not letting anyone live in poverty
To provide clothes and shelter for the needy
In fact, I sometimes don't understand how you let
so much stuff go on
So much "Injustice"
Lord, show me my role in helping my fellow human
beings
To live as comfortable, content, happy, and safe
As I have
This side of me wants to father everyone
But, sometimes I want to push all the "Evil and
Selfish" people off a cliff
In order to bring peace and harmony to the world
But, then I find myself running to the bottom
of that cliff, And catching them all gently
This conflict of emotions: I have all the time
It is really painful, and it's not getting me
anywhere
Sometimes I just want to relax, and not worry
about the problems, injustices, restrictions,
and pressures of our modern day society, or
About those who are not comfortable, content,
happy, and safe
But, I can't do that
Lord, please show me my role in helping my
fellow human beings

I Had A Dream

Rhonda McLaurin

I had a dream—a
dream that I had
borne a child who
was ashamed of
its Blackness.

I had a dream—a
dream that this
genderless child
looked at his
Uncle Malcolm and
Aunt Nikki and regarded
them as Dr. Jekyll and
Erma Bombeck.
And used those names interchangeably.

I had a dream—a
dream that my child collaborated
with white forces to wage a
war on the whole of Africa.
They claimed that it was
too much darkness for one continent to bear.

I had a dream—a
dream? a dream?
Or was it a nocturnal nightmare
knocking on my noggin telling me
to wake and reassert my Blackness?

Song of Guyana

Patricia A. Burnette

My fate was sensed in my youth,
The ways of the world
Sin,
Starvation,
Poverty.

My later years brought an awakening in my soul.
Dedication to the world's
Poor,
Hopeless,
Starving souls.

Brotherhood for all mankind.
A desire to lead my people.

My people are happy
Their souls are free.
All is well
With God and me.

The Abductors

Micheal L. King

They came to our home
To pirate all that could be abducted.
They abducted my mother
  A need for true feminity
They beat my father
  Their spouse's rivaled as more capable.
They labled my father as ignorant.
  An act of ignorance
They charged my father with inferiority
An act of fear
They abducted my father's name
  An act performed to lessen him
They bestowed upon Father the pseudonym—Toby
  Translated—" the boy"
They abducted my father's drum
  For it resounded an unknown message
They donated my father the Herculean tasks
  A sign of weakness
They presented to my mother the kitchen
  Waging war on malnutrition
They granted my father studship
  Adhering to their spouse's accusations
They took my mother to bed often
  His spouse balling my father
Their spouse drilled my father as bulter
  She fancied his tool.

They shot my brother
  "Yes-su" meant that much to them
They are my younger brothe's daddy
  Mom performed well
They blamed my father's education
  In fear of retaliation
Their offspring restored our freedom
  And snatched it back with the law
They said, "Give me liberty, or give me death"
  Resounding my father's endless plea.
They materialized a many wonders
  With my father as, the builder,
  architect, designer, and creator
They told me to adhere. That I couldn't,
I wouldn't, I can't.

I'm telling them.
I can
I will
I shall
I have

It's no more They
It's we
or
Us shall cease to be

As (A Beginning and An Ending)
Kecia E. Miller

As an infant—beginning;
As a child—niave;
As a youth—learning;
As an adult—experiencing;
As a corpse—ending;

Each life takes this pattern.
Each life has a beginning and an ending;
Each life is spent searching;
Each life is spent discovering;
Each life takes a place in history;
Each life has a beginning and an ending.

One moment in time, it begins,
One moment it is laughing;
One moment it is crying;
One moment it is kind;
One moment it is cruel;
One moment in time, it ends.

Come into the world
Playing,
  Learning,
    Participating,
      Teaching,
        Anticipating life.

Life is an incessant spindle, constantly spinning its golden thread
which seems not to end;
But then what is death, if life never ends.

Teen-Age Prayer

Teresa Click

Heavenly Father, Father of grace
Bless my man's handsome face
Bless his eyes that are so bright
May he always hold me tight
Bless his hair with all the knots
May he always love me lots
Bless his legs with manly hair curls
Keep him safe from all other girls
Bless his hands so full and strong
Help him keep them where they belong
Bless his parents who are not wrong
Because of them he came along
Bless them both short and tall
Because I love him most of all
Bless us both that we may marry
Bless his children that I may carry
Bless us both so we won't fight
To keep the neighbors up all night
And may we always be content
Thank-you Lord for one man you sent
Heavenly Father from above
Please protect the man I love
AMEN

If I Could Only

Kim D. Ellis

If I could only express how
I feel.
My words tend to hide, hidden behind
a shield.
If I could only say the words that
seem to hide,
Unexpressed feelings, shadowed behind
a smile, hidden inside.
If I could only speak the words
that come to mind,
Looking into my soul, always seeking
to find.
If I could only be a leader and
everyone would listen.
Is it true self esteem that I'm missin?
If I could only search for that missing
link,
I need some time to listen, learn,
and think!
If I Could Only...

Pleasure, Survival and Love

Hawk II

The life we live is our own creation
We chart the course of our destination
Though on the track we sometimes fail to stay
Don't look back 'cause there's a brighter day

No man can totally live without pleasure
But we often take more than our measure
Life with no fun is dull and incomplete
Where excess exist there the danger may be

To survive is the aim of every man
Though often we do not feel that we can
But be not discouraged by your fears and doubt
For if you have faith you'll find a way out

Though of steel some men believe they are made
The elements of love he cannot evade
Everyone needs some tender lovin' care
So don't you hesitate to get your share

In this world—pleasure, survival and love
Are three factors of life we all think of
There's pleasure when we survive to love in life
It makes us feel that we want to live twice

Doubtfully

Rhonda McLaurin

We sat
and nonchalantly raved on
about items of total insignificance.
Both dealt with each topic as though it
was of utmost concern, knowing all the while, it
was at ''best'' a way to get through the evening.
You in your moment of absurdity
commented on the weather.
And I, in my pessimitic manner, thought the
statement had about as much spunk as a
pair of plastic curtains.
For a few moments we, without word, inspected
each other, wondering if we'd ever get the chance to
evoke some sort of emotion from the other.
Doubtfully!

For the Thought of a Dream

Paul Frank Vandergrift III

For the thought of a dream...
A dream that surpasses all reality.
Dreams that create worlds of emotion;
Emotions that build and destroy
man's creation
For the thought of a dream . . .
Man imitates the ideal man;
The man he has created for
the thought of a dream.
A man that can be looked at
and yet not seen . . .
For the thought of a dream;
. . . we have the untouchable love
a love without fault!
A love that is only love; a love
that has been creatd . . .For
the thought of a dream.
By the thought of a dream we
have the true world, the world
that wakes us from the dream.
The world that was made . . .
For the thought of a dream.

SO OFTEN MY DEAR

Kathy "Tootie" Blackmon

SO OFTEN I SIT AND THINK OF YOU
SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY, SOMETIMES I'M BLUE.

SO OFTEN I THINK OF THE GREAT MOMENTS WE SHARE
AND THEN I REALIZE YOU MUST CARE.

SO OFTEN I WISH TO BE WITH YOU
I'VE TRIED SO MANY THINGS, "DOC, WHAT CAN I DO?"

SO OFTEN MY DEAR I SIT AND WRITE YOU LETTERS
I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY SAY, BUT THEY MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

SO OFTEN YOU'VE TOLD ME WE SHOULD DEPART FOR SAKE
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE ME HAPPY, THE DECISION TO STAY TOGETHER YOU WOULD MAKE.

SO OFTEN I'VE CRIED FROM THE LONLINESS I FEEL WHEN YOU'RE NOT HERE
MANY THINGS RUN THROUGH MY MIND LIKE IS HE PLAYING BALL, IS HE WITH HER OR WITH THE GUYS DRINKING BEER.

SO OFTEN I'VE PRAYED TO HEAR YOU SAY I'M YOUR ONE AND ONLY ONE
BUT I'M GRATEFUL FOR WHAT I DO HAVE BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I COULD HAVE NONE.

Special Thanks

Ex Umbra would like to especially thank an outstanding poet and a wonderful woman, Gwendolyn Brooks, who visited our campus on November 12, 1981. She has graciously allowed us to publish two of her finer works in this edition.

With deep sincerity, thanks.

Darryl E. Hylton
Editor-in-Chief

Sadie And Maud

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Maud went to college.
Sadie stayed at home.
Sadie scraped life
With a fine-tooth comb.

She didn't leave a tangle in.
Her comb found every strand.
Sadie was one of the livingest chits
In all the land.

Sadie bore two babies
Under her maiden name.
Maud and Ma and Papa
Nearly died of shame.

When Sadie said her last so-long
Her girls struck out from home.
(Sadie had left as heritage
Her fine-tooth comb.)

Maud, who went to college,
Is a thin brown mouse.
She is living all alone
In this old house.

A SONG IN THE FRONT YARD

Gwendolyn Brooks

I've stayed in the front yard all my life.
I want a peek at the back
Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.
A girl gets sick of a rose.

I want to go in the back yard now
And maybe down the alley,
To where the charity children play.
I want a good time today.

They do wonderful things.
They have some wonderful fun.
My mother sneers, but I say it's fine
How they don't have to go in at quarter to nine.
My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae
Will grow up to be a bad woman.
That George'll be taken to jail soon or late
(On account of last winter he sold our back gate).

But I say it's fine. Honest, I do.
And I'd like to be a bad woman, too,
And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace
And strut down the streets with paint on my face.

Fun, Fun, Fun

Stephanie A. Davis

Great times by the dozen, anyone
in the market? Content, Content,
got to be content. Mustn' be greedy,
but I only live once, got to do it
right the first time. There ain't
no starting over. Only pick up
where I left off thousands
of times. Gotta make a brand new start.
Have you heard it before? hear it again.

I Know I Can

James H. Bond III

There goes that simpleton marching around again. Why doesn't he just quit and go relax. I can't relax, because I have too much pride in myself.

I may not know everything about what I should know. But, I do know that each phase, each drill and each procedure has some significant purpose.

In order for me to establish myself, I have to love my fellow man. People walk around not caring and not believing in themselves or in anyone else. All we have to do is love and trust in God. Love can conquer hatred, ignorance, and any stumbling block.

I had a talk with my great uncle once, he told me that success was getting along with others, willing to help others, establishing yourself first as a person, and then making what one wants out of life, no longer a mirror image but reality.

The choir members are made of a mighty pride, strength, and a power held inside so great, it makes me want to strive my hardest to be a portion from their mold. One day maybe, we all can be as they are, true compassionate people possessing love, everlasting faith, trust and having peace of mind.

Apathetic(AtTimes)

Rhonda McLaurin

The Establishment was getting
ready to lay down some illegal laws.
They asked for my suggestions and comments,
but I sat in the back and gossiped
Rendering only destructive criticism to those
Whom it made no difference.
Going once!
Going twice!
Going three times!
GONE to the Establishment!
Now I'm discontent
and wanting change!

At One Point In Time

Brenda D. Fredlaw

Black Woman.
Beautiful Black Woman.
That you were at one point in time.
Now the beautiful clothes you onced cherished are all full of soot and grime.
Black Woman,
What happened to you?
Is it because you're in another place and time?
No longer do you wine and dine.
No longer do you ever have the time.

Black Woman.
Beautiful Black Woman.
That you were at one point in time.
Did you ever get to fulfill your goal?
Did you find a man to make happy your soul?
Black Woman,
What happened to you?
Is it because your man did not complete his task?
Because of him, is it why you now wear a mask?
Because of him, is it why you have suppressed?

Black Woman.
Beautiful Black Woman.
That you were at one point in time.
Do you have no feelings deep inside?
Why did you let him do this to you, do you not have self-pride?
Black Woman,
What happened to you?
Just because his race was white,
Did you think he'd be your Mr. Right?

Black Woman.
Beautiful Black Woman.
That you were at one point in time.
Why did you worship him, like he was God?
Now your destiny is hard.
Black Woman,
What happened to you?
Now scrubbing floors, cleaning fire places are your test.
One's you must acheive to your best.

Black Woman.
Beautiful Black Woman.
That you were at one point in time.
I'm sorry your life turned out this way.
But your relatives you did not obey.
Black Woman,
What happened to you?
To you, was the love you two shared so vague?
That one day you would become his slave?

A Letter to My Brother

Stephanie A. Davis

Hello dear brother,
Oh how I do love
you, let me count the ways:

1. All the times we've argued
2. All the times we've fought
3. All the times I took your money
4. All the times I made you change the channel on t.v. and made you wash the dishes.

My dear brother, how I do love
you, let me not count the ways.

LOVE,
Stephanie

My Dear Friend

Michele N. Cox

I need you now, my dear friend
My life is in complete turmoil

I need you now, my dear friend
to help lift my spirits up

I need you now, my dear friend
to comfort me in my times of trouble

I need you now, my dear friend
to talk to me when I am lonely

But most of all, my dear friend
I need you always.

Just A Rap

Kim D. Ellis

I like you because you're you
My babe, my sweetheart, my everything
My body being close to yours
the melody and joy your vibes bring
Feeling your lips close to mine
Makes the clouds go away and the sun shine
Creating visions of you in my mind
Love songs play-thinking of you all the time
My minds made up to feel this way
Strange the feelings you bring day by day
Entangled by my words—it's a trap!
Because all these words I say to you
Are—Just A Rap!

Life

''Ru Fus''

Life is doing your best in whatever you do
and that is a piece of advice from me to you
So whatever you do, do it good
for the sake of brotherhood.
And do your best
while staying with the rest
of the world.
You don't have to be the latest
just be one of the greatest! (smile)

Ken

Anonymous

Why did you grant me the
opportunity to experience the
sensations of your wonderful
touch;
When you knew all along that
our relationship would not grow
to be very much?

With your rigorous carressment
you made me feel an inclination
in my soul;
One that for no reason did I
want to control.

I accepted your affection as a
symbol of devotion;
But little did I know that you
were only displaying a deceptive
emotion.

So now I conclude having done
something for which I should be
ashamed;
While you contemplate the fact
that I should not have been
such a vulnerable dame.

Growth

Micheal L. King

The filling of a void
To which matter now—exist

The forming of a shape
To which line—becomes an altered function

The appearance of accumulation
To which deposits—become as ecosystem

The gain of an unwanted—entity
To which one's life—is filled with obesity

The special-K "pinch"
Which becomes—self-activating

The cups of life
Which suddenly, advances a form

The breath of his tool
To which, you suddenly learn to love

The forming of a closeness
To which you unconsciously welcome

Growth—the maturation of one's
APPERCEPTIVE MASS.

Reflections

Bonita A. McZorn

I stood before the mirror
wondering who that serene person was.
The reflection was so lucid
yet so full of mystery.
Observing with despondency, the pain had
been again detained.
Shadows contoured the remainder
so that the reflection remained unchanged.

But slowly the torments were released
and a fresh face appeared.
Bitter thoughts commuted to a place
in the hidden valleys of my mind.

Watching from the other side gives one
a true perspective to forsee.
As the old becomes the new my
indigent feelings fade quietly away.

Yesterday is gone and today is the past of tommorrow.
Everything must change.
I am living proof today!

Before There Was You

Kecia E. Miller

Before there was you—
I never knew the need and anguish that love provokes.
Before there was you—
I never knew how it felt to be so close to some that one feels his touch even if he's not present.
Before there was you—
I was confused, alone, and in desperate need of someone to hold onto.
Now that you are here—
I experience a joy I never knew I could attain on the earth.
Now that you are here—
Each moment is more special;
Days are shining.
Each piece of nature is more beautiful than it ever appeared to be before.
Now that you are here—
I feel stability and happiness in knowing I'll always have someone to turn to.

Before there was you—
I was alone.
Now you are here—
I love.

Coming Out

Michael L. King

The Encounter

As I stumbled into my health class a few months back, I had no premonition that within a couple of weeks I would be on the verge of being lured into an eminent confrontation, that is, a relationship in which the innocent half is used and hurt with no forseeable sign of liberation due to commiserated entrapment.

As normal, I made my way to the front of the class, not to be seen, but to be able to see. As I sat down in the first desk I felt obligated to speak to whom ever was sitting behind me. For I hadn't noticed whether the patron was a male or female, but the urge to find out was strong.

As I commenced to do so, I was greeted by the deviant stare of a female creole. For her eyes and her bashful visage seemed to challenge me to interact with her.

I was somewhat moved for a second or two because the feeling that had initiated my desire to turn around became unbearably strong. So much so that I had to break eye contact before I could speak.

''How are you doing lady?'' I said, confused and somewhat bashful. But to my suprise, her reply and it's fragile tone gave her away as being very gentle and a little selfconscious as to how much—if any—influence, would her dainty, model apperance have upon me.

Blushing, she said, ''Oh, I'm okay.'' As she answered, I noticed that she was fidgeting in her seat, playing with a pencil and rubber band.

These signs of her uneasiness gave me renewed confidence in my presumption that whatever I would say next would be heard with more than a complacent earlobe, but would be wecolmed with an open but not necessarily a free mind, due to signs of loneliness which she betrayed.

''What is your name?'' I inquired of her, while sizing her up in my mind and trying to decide whether or not she was worthy of my patience.

But in the midst of my comtemplating she answered eagerly saying, ''Letha Mitchell, and yours?''

''Nickie Preval III,'' I replied with renewed valor.

We conversed for two minutes more, until the instructor entered the classroom, but I couldn't help thinking of her during the instructor's lecture. For this young lady had left an unerasable impression—of honesty, loneliness, and innocence—upon my person.

After class we were accidently going to the same building for our next class, and suddenly we both became available for conversement.

This cycle of arbitrarily being in each other's presence soon began to take it's toll upon both of us.

I couldn't see her enough, though I tried continously to deny the fact. It became apparent later that she felt the same.

I realized that I really cared for her while dancing at a disco one night. The 'D.J.' played a slow song and called for lovers only. I wanted to dance with her but another hard-head cut in on me. All night I had been dancing with other girls although Letha was my date. I guess I was trying to prove to myself that she didn't mean anything to me. But just as soon as that hard-head commenced to grind on her and to breath down her neck, I became jealous and probably a little mad although I didn't let her see it, because I was ashamed of myself for reacting in such a possessive manner.

By just being together off and on, in class and just mingling together during our free time, I could feel that bond was trying to formulate between us despite my inner blockades to cut it off at its' debut stage.

It began to bother me, because Letha had told me that she was frustrated with herself, because she could not break away from a relationship, which she feared would cause irremediable damage to the other party, if in fact there was rescind.

That within itself did not worry me as much as did the fact that this type of pressure could, and would soon render ill health effects on Letha, mentally and physically.

Letha was only nineteen, but was bearing the physical signs of a twenty-five year old woman, with a malignant nerve disorder.

Her academic endeavors went from recall to earn a superior mark two days in advance of cramming for test, to earn a borderline below average mark. And inadvertently she seemed not to care. Her mind and her character had finally been poisened by her mentor-male-friend, Billy Dee Owens.

I tried talking to Letha on the subject several times, but it seemed that she felt I was talking only on my behalf and not for her welfare. For her mentor-male-friend had confronted her with serious bodily harm if she failed him and if that wasn't enough he would resort to suicide.

It was these thorns within Letha's life that initiated her want-only desire to misue drugs, alchohol and various other mind-altering substances.

The dainty young lady that I had encounted just eight months before, had all but cut off her own life in fear of her mentor taking his.

"Surely, there must be a way to disssolve this crisis?" I thought. But in vain, that was all it became—a thought. For I learned from Letha that through all of her hurts and pains, she felt that a bond existed between her and her mentor.

Finally she told me, that three years earlier she had conceived a life form through interaction with her male-mentor, and that Letha willfully entrapped herself inside her mentor's web.

Learning this made me feel that the days I had spent cotemplating what I could do to help, the nights that I had lain awake in darkness inquiring from the inevitable, being why had he chosen such an innocent young lady, and the hours I had spent talking to her, were invariably a waste of a genuine, concerned, emotional effort.

Letha was her own enemy. She was frightened; therefore, she sought and found excuses to justify her mentor's actions. And because of the bond she thought they had, she chose unconsciously to remain webbed, up until the Day of Confrontation.

Family

Not only had Billy poisoned Letha's mind, but he had, achieved the same success with Letha's family. Giving Letha reason to believe that his actions were basically right, and that something was wrong with her for thinking otherwise.

Mrs. Flucey, Letha's mother would constantly repeat Billy's ideas, wants, and needs, with on consideration for her own daughter.

On one occassion said Letha, "Mama threatened to ground me because Billy told her that I was seeing you and you were into drugs very heavy."

''Did she ask you whether or not it was true,'' I asked.

''No. She waited until we were eating dinner and then daddy and her told me that I was on drugs and that you were a pimp.''

''Well Letha, how did they come up with the 'Pimp' bit, I asked annoyingly.

''I don't know, but Billy probably told them that. I remember last week after dinner they told me they believed that Shirley and I were prostituting our bodies because we stayed out until one o'clock at night.''

''You're lying!''

''No I'm not. Nickie, you know they even went as far as to hint around the idea of Shirley and I being funny. And so did Shirley's mother,'' she replied hurtingly.

After hearing this last reply I had to stop and collect my thoughts. I never dreamed that they were on her case so bad. Factually, they didn't even have a slight cause to imagine such gross defamations of characters about Letha, Shirley and me.

After a very emotional chat with Letha and Shirley—Letha's best friend—concerning the predicment, conquences and possible remedies of the problems, we decided to ignore their friends and families' false accusations, and to let Letha concentrate on her relationship with Billy.

Shirley and I decided not to interfer, or attempt to influence her decision concerning him. I must admit that I wanted to influence her in any way possible, but fathfully I held my peace.

For a while it seemed that Letha would never formulate a workable solution. I continued to to converse with her after class, while she would continuously go home, leave home and drink until she became insultingly intoxicated, enabling her to tolerate her mentor's presence and his impotent attempt at the act of making love. Though Billy was chronologically nineteen and mentally fifteen, he bore the physical features of a thirty-five year old confused individual.

The Confrontation

After about five months of friendly mingling with Letha, we went out on a date for the second time. It wasn't much—skating at the rink—but for Letha it was a big step. For her mentor would surely beat a tumor on her head—if in fact he caught her with another male companion.

"Nickie, did you enjoy yourself?" she asked innocently, as we were about to leave.

"Yes, but it could have been better," I hinted. "Wanta go eat or something? I mean, if you don't think you'll get in trouble?"

She replied, "What do you mean, if you get in trouble? In trouble with who? Are you trying to be funny?"

"No. I just don't want to impose on your sense of direction. I mean . . . "

"Why don't you hush that bull," she replied angrily. "I'm my own woman, and ain't no half- ass, self centered, sex crazed, impotent, poor excuse for a boyfriend gonna stop me from doing what I want to do. He does what he wanta. He has another girl. He wont take me anywhere. And all he wants to do is sit with at home, get fat, and let him play with my boo-boo. Nickie, he never pleases me. I hate laying down with him. It's awful . . . " she shouted before she broke down crying like a baby.

"Nickie. I know you didn't, and I didn't mean to holler at you, but all I want is to be happy sometimes. All I want is to feel like a woman, not an object. All I want is for my family to sit down and let me tell them how I feel; what I want; what I believe in. For them and everybody else to accept Letha as a woman, not their solictor of over protection and pity. I . . ."

"Letha, stop! You're only making it worse. Come on, I'll take you home."

"No. I don't wanta go home. I wanta go with you, I wanta talk."

"Are you sure it'll be okay. I mean . . ."

"Yes. I can't talk to no one else. Please!"

Hesitatingly I gave in, replying "Uh, okay we'll try it. What the hell."

We got into my car and went to my pad. Although she had been here many times before, she had never been here without her friend, Shirley.

We sat down and began to talk. She tried very hard to express herself between sobs, but nothing really was said of dire importance. Then, suddenly she surprised me.

"Nickie, if I ask you something you won't think bad of me will you?" she asked innocently.

"I may not agree with it, but I won't down you for your ideas," was my reply.

"But Letha . . ."

"Are you afraid? Are you capable Nickie?" she teasingly shouted.

That was all it took. I didn't want her to do something which she would regret later—although I wanted her just as bad as she wanted me—but she left me with no course of retreat. I accepted her challenge.

This monumental act of making love was not only an act of giving, but for her it was a reassurance that she was normal. That giving herself fully to a male companion did not have to hurt.

She cried softly through it all. For every trinklet of moisture was a droplet of relief, of tension, of frustration, of happiness; happiness in knowing that she was a woman who could perform and enjoy as a woman, without the assistance of alcohol and drugs. She had finally succeeded in disproving her associates' notions that it had been otherwise.

I remember sitting in the den afterwards and she said, "Nickie, thank you. You made me feel like I was human." And she smiled and sobbed continously.

I felt relieved. She was now beginning to think for herself.

At about ten o'clock that night, her friend Shirley called and announced that she would be coming over if we didn't mind. She was lonesome.

Shirley was presently dating my fraternity brother named Danny Peters, but for some reason she had been unsuccessful in finding him on this warm Thursday night.

At ten-thirty Shirley knocked at the door.

During the course of our chatting someone—but who?—had been blowing his horn endlessly in the street in front of my apartment.

Suddenly we all became aware of this fact. Letha said, "That sounds like Billy's car horn."

"How can you tell?" replied Shirley.

"I don't know. I just can. Look out the window Shirley, and see."

I waited impatiently for the results of Shirley's surveillance. And sure enough it was as Letha had predicted.

"Dagg girl, how did he know you were over here?" questioned Shirley.

"I don't know but I had a feeling that he would show up. He's gonna get me. He's gonna beat me up. I know he will . . ."

"Letha! Hush!" I instructed, but before I could say anymore she had run to my bedroom and closed the door.

I pursued her and requested that she open the door so that I could talk to her. Hesitatingly she did, though she was only a ball of nerves with tears of hatred, fear, and self pity, forcefully caressing her mulatto cheeks.

"Look Letha you can't run. You're gonna have to confront this problem sooner or later anyway; the sooner the better."

"But Nickie, he's gonna beat me up. I know he will. He . . ."

"Letha. Please! Calm down. Look. You have two options. One, you can remain inside, and I will protect you; and two, you can go outside and confront the inevitable. The catch is, if you go outside then my hands will be tied unless he tries to hurt you physically. Now you have to make up your mind as to what is best for you."

Between her sobs she decided to confront her male-mentor.

"Okay, I'm going outside and listen to what he has to say. But . . "

"Letha, if you just need me holler. The front door will be open and I'll keep you under surveillance. Come on, let's go out."

When we reached the front door we discovered that Shirley had made—it seemed—a quick departure without our knowing it.

By this time Letha had calmed down considerably. She looked at me as if to say, "Don't worry, I'll return." Then she kissed me on the cheek and went out the door.

I felt that we had conversed for the last time. That our first and only intimate moment would have to suffice as our only sexual close encounter, as the culmination of a great beginning.

Letha and Billy had been arguing back and forth for about ten minutes. I listened intently until my telephone rung. I made my way to the phone and as I picked it up I felt an abnormal thump within my chest. Something had happened, but what . . .?

. . . Billy had struck Letha across the side of her head with rock crushing force. Letha was lying on the grass motionless, with her male-mentor standing over her.

To be continued. . .

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